

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

Dunnellon horse is the latest to test positive for Eastern equine encephalitis

OCALA—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County is urging residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites.

“Rainy season is our most active time for mosquito-borne illnesses,” said Dan Dooley, environmental administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. “This year is no exception.”

Plenty of rain and warm temperatures have provided good conditions for mosquitoes to flourish. In Marion County, Eastern equine encephalitis has flourished as well. A Dunnellon horse is the latest to test positive for the virus. It is the seventh horse this year to test positive.

Marion County is under a mosquito-borne illness advisory, joining seven other Florida counties so far this year.

The virus is showing up in many areas as well as in larger numbers this year. Horses have tested positive all across the county. Although we have been lucky so far, the virus can also infect humans with devastating effects.

“Wherever you are, in Marion County or elsewhere, you need to take precautions,” said Dooley. “If you are outside, cover yourself to help prevent mosquito bites.

Covering your skin with clothing—shoes, socks, long pants, long-sleeves—will keep mosquitoes from finding a place to bite. You can apply repellent to your clothing for extra protection, but be sure to apply mosquito repellent to bare skin. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are effective. When using repellents, always follow the recommendations on the product label.

And don't forget to keep mosquitoes out of the house. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches, and patios. Prevent mosquitoes from multiplying around your property by draining standing water. Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected. Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.

Eastern equine encephalitis isn't the only mosquito-borne illness affecting Floridians.

Chikungunya fever. Four cases of locally acquired chikungunya fever have been reported in Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie counties.

Dengue fever. One case of locally acquired dengue fever in a Miami-Dade County resident was reported in June.

Florida Department of Health

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West Nile virus. The West Nile virus is also found in Florida. No human cases have been reported this year, but the virus has shown up in animals in seven counties.

“Be careful when you are away from home as well,” said Dooley. “You can catch these and many other mosquito-borne illnesses in other states and other countries.”

Floridians returning home after traveling to other countries can bring chikungunya, dengue and West Nile virus infections home with them. More exotic infections include the St. Louis encephalitis, Highlands J, and California encephalitis group viruses, as well as malaria. The same precautions apply: cover yourself with clothing and repellent.

“Mosquitoes love Florida summers,” said Dooley. “Drain standing water around the house, and cover yourself so you can avoid these illnesses.”

Find out more about mosquito-borne disease on the Department’s website:

www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases

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